

# Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.

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by  
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## Summary

During the 1999 legislative session, the Legislature enacted ch. 99-353, L.O.F., relating to environmental protection. Included in that act was a provision that the hunting and fishing licenses and permits established under ch. 372, F.S., and the exemptions thereto, shall be reviewed by the Legislature during its regular session every 5 years beginning in 2000.

When the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission was created in 1942, it was empowered to fix bag limits, fix open/closed seasons, and regulate the manner and method of taking, transporting, stocking and otherwise using birds, game, freshwater fish, reptiles and amphibians. The Legislature reserved the right to fix license fees, and penalties for violations and could therefore restrict the Commission's activities by limiting revenue. Revenue from hunting and fishing licenses, enforcement of regulations, and federal matching funds are deposited in the State Game Trust Fund.

Over the years, the Commission has had to rely on substantial subsidies from the state's General Revenue Fund in order to meet its operating expenses. The percentage of subsidies from the General Revenue Fund has fluctuated between 30 percent to almost 50 percent during the last decade. While the percentage may fluctuate, the actual dollars received from the General Revenue Fund continues to rise.

Over the past 9 years, the Commission has repeatedly faced shortfalls in the State Game Trust Fund. Recent information received from the agency indicates that the Commission may be facing a revenue shortfall of \$1.8 million in the State Game Trust Fund in FY 2000-01. The projected shortfall rises to \$2.8 million in FY 2001-02, and \$3.3 million in FY 2002-03.

There are several reasons for the shortfall. One of the most obvious is that the Commission is not selling enough hunting and fishing licenses to cover the expenses of the agency. In addition, the cost of issuing some licenses and permits exceeds the revenue derived from the sale of such licenses and permits.

Many of the license fees have not been raised since they were established -- some dating back to 1929. Others have not been changed in at least 20 years.

Over the years, the Legislature has provided for various exemptions to the state's fishing and hunting license and permitting requirements. If you add up the number of persons that are exempt from hunting and fishing licenses by virtue of age or disability, over 30 percent of Florida's population is exempt.

Florida appears to have the edge over other Southeastern states when it comes to fishing opportunities, both freshwater and saltwater. There are approximately 7,710 natural lakes in Florida which are 10 acres or more in size, and about 1 million acres of manmade impoundments. Finally, there are 1,711 rivers and streams with over 11,500 miles of water. This does not take into account the over 8,400 miles of coastline.

Hunting opportunities in Florida continue to decline as Florida becomes more and more urbanized. Conservation land buying programs, such as Preservation 2000 (P-2000), Conservation and Recreation Lands (CARL) and Florida Forever are helping to slow the loss of such recreational opportunities. The Commission has reported that the sale of hunting licenses in Florida declined 2.3 percent during 1998-1999.

The Commission recently surveyed 26 states including all of the Southeastern states, and California and Texas. In comparing the costs of licences, the Commission found that Florida's license fees were less than the national average for every category, except nonresident hunting and resident trapping. However, Florida's fees do not require additional special tags or permits for hunting big game, such as deer, elk, etc. Some states require special permits in addition to the regular licenses for such game.

## **Background**

During the 1999 legislative session, the Legislature enacted ch. 99-353, L.O.F., relating to environmental protection. Included in that act was a provision that the hunting and fishing licenses and permits established under ch. 372, F.S., and the exemptions thereto, shall be reviewed by the Legislature during its regular session every 5 years beginning in 2000.

Many of these fees have not been changed in many years and the cost increases of the agency's operations cannot be met from these user fees. As a consequence, the increased cost of agency operations have created more demand on the General Revenue Fund.

## **Methodology**

Staff developed a questionnaire and sent it to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission.<sup>1</sup> Their response was due July 10, 1999. Staff received a response to the questionnaire from the Fish and Wildlife Commission on July 2, 1999.

A list of the license fees and exemptions authorized in law was developed and a historical review was made of the changes and adjustments in these fees and exemptions.

An analysis was made of how much of the agency's operations have been dependent on the revenues from these fees and subsidies from the General Revenue Fund.

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<sup>1</sup>On July 1, 1999, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission ceased to exist and became part of the constitutionally created Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

## Findings

By the 1940's, Florida began experiencing a crisis concerning its wildlife population. There were serious concerns regarding over-hunting and the devastating effects on the wildlife that was once thought to be inexhaustible. In 1941, the Legislature enacted several pro-conservation measures such as reducing the fish bag limits, increasing the fishing licenses by \$1, and appropriating \$50,000 to restock deer killed during a tick-eradication campaign in the 1930's. The actions of the 1941 Legislature made it possible for Florida to accept federal Pittman-Robertson conservation funds. The federal funds made it possible to fund deer replacement, land acquisition, wildlife research, development of existing refuges and farm habitat restoration.

On November 3, 1942, Florida voters approved the creation of the five-member Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. This Commission was empowered to fix bag limits; fix open/closed seasons on a statewide, regional or local basis; and regulate the manner and method of taking, transporting, stocking and otherwise using birds, game, freshwater fish, reptiles and amphibians. The Legislature reserved the right to fix the license fees and penalties for violations, therefore allowing the Legislature to restrict the Commission's activities by limiting revenue. Revenue from hunting and fishing licenses, enforcement of regulations through penalties, and federal matching funds are deposited into the State Game Trust Fund. This trust fund is the main fund used by the Commission for funding its operations.

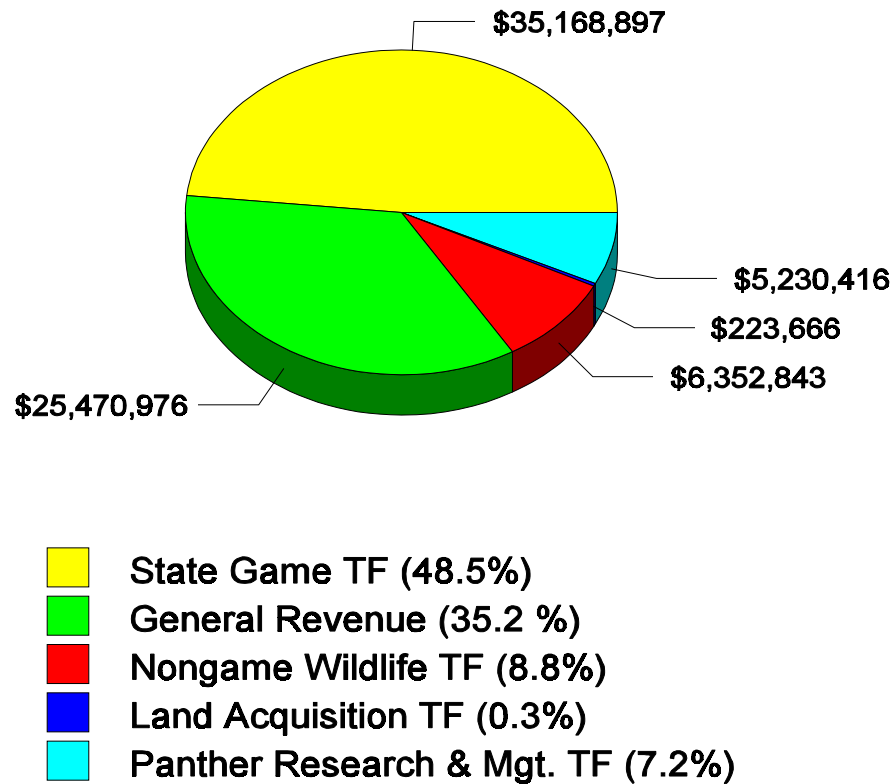
On July 1, 1999, as a result of a constitutional amendment approved by Florida voters in November 1998, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission was created. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission now has jurisdiction over those areas formerly administered by the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission, including statutory responsibilities assigned by ch. 372, F.S.

In 1942 when the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission was created, hunting and fishing licenses were about the only source of revenue for this agency. Today, these license sales barely make up 30 percent of agency's total revenues (including federal matching funds), while 34 percent of revenues comes from the state's General Revenue Fund. License revenues are deposited into the State Game Trust Fund. Other funds which support the Commission's activities include the Nongame Wildlife Trust Fund, the Panther Research and Management Trust Fund, and the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. The charts on the following two pages indicate the percentage each fund contributes to the operations of the Commission and the 10-year appropriations history for the Commission.



## Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission

### Agency Operating Funding by Rev. Source for FY 1998-99



*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

*(INSERT BAR CHART)*

Since the mid 1980's, the Game and Freshwater Fish Commission has had to depend on significant subsidies of General Revenue to meet its operating costs. In 1985-86, the Commission had a total operations budget of \$30 million, of which 46 percent came from the state's General Revenue Fund. By 1989-90, the Commission's operating budget was \$51 million of which 38 percent was appropriated from the General Revenue Fund. By 1994-95, the Commission's operations budget was \$62.9 million and 31 percent came from the General Revenue Fund, and in 1998-99, 35 percent or \$26 million came from the General Revenue Fund. While the percentage of subsidies from the General Revenue Fund fluctuates, the actual dollars received continues to rise.

Over the past 9 years, the Commission has repeatedly faced shortfalls in the State Game Trust Fund. For FY 1997-98, the Commission was facing a \$3 million shortfall in its ability to fund the Commission's ongoing operations. Recent information from the agency indicates that they may be facing a revenue shortfall of \$1.8 million in the State Game Trust Fund in FY 2000-01. The projected shortfall rises to \$2.8 million in FY 2001-02, and \$3.3 million in FY 2002-03.

Of the more than 85 licenses issued pursuant to ch. 372, F.S., the annual resident fishing license and the annual management area permits are the largest sources of fee revenues. In FY 1997-1998, the annual resident fishing license produced approximately \$4.8 million and the annual management area permits produced \$1.4 million. The next two largest fee producers are the nonresident annual fishing license (\$1.3 million) and the annual resident hunting license (\$1.5 million).

There are many reasons why the Commission's sales revenue has dropped. The most obvious reason is that it is not selling enough hunting and fishing licenses to cover the expenses of the agency. License sales are continuing to decline while annual pay raises are placing an additional \$800,000 a year burden on the State Game Trust Fund. The cost of issuing some licenses and permits exceeds the revenue derived from the sale of such licenses and permits.

Chapter 372, F.S., provides the authorization for the various hunting and freshwater fishing licenses and permits, as well as, the exemptions that apply to such permits and licenses. The following series of tables shows the various licenses and permits issued by the Commission, their costs, statutory authorization, and revenues raised.

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

<b><u>Table I</u></b> <b><u>Freshwater Fishing/Hunt</u></b> <b><u>(Age 16-64)</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Establish</u></b>	<b><u>Last Fee</u></b> <b><u>Change</u></b>	<b><u>Statutory</u></b> <b><u>Reference</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998</u></b> <b><u>Number Sold</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998</u></b> <b><u>Revenue</u></b>
Res. Combo Fresh Fish & Hunt 12 month	\$22	1965	1989	372.57	40,756	\$896,632
Res. Sportsman-12 mo.	\$66	1987	1989	372.57	19,793	\$1,306,338
Res. 64 or older Sportsman-Lifetime	\$12	1990	1990	372.57	1,607	\$19,284
Res. Fresh Fish-12 mo.	\$12	1929	1989	372.57	397,974	\$4,775,668
Nonres. Fresh Fish-12 mo.	\$30	1929	1989	372.57	43,694	\$1,310,820
Nonres. Fresh Fish-7 day	\$15	1989	1989	372.57	25,232	\$378,480
Res. Hunting-12 mo.	\$11	1929	1979	372.57	104,176	\$1,145,936
Nonres. Hunting-12 mo.	\$150	1929	1989	372.57	460	\$69,000
Nonres. Hunting-10 day	\$25	1989	1989	372.57	4,971	\$124,275
Trapping (Res. & Nonres)-12 mo.	\$25	1929	1967	372.57	288	\$7,200
Mgmt. Area Permit-12 mo.	\$25	1949	1989	372.57	56,139	\$1,403,475
Mgmt. Area Permit-1 day One person \$3 Vehicle-noncom. \$6 Group 25-100 \$75 Group >100 \$150		1996	1996	372.57		\$80,300
Archery Permit-12 mo.	\$5	1949	1986	372.57	30,956	\$154,780
Muzzle loading Permit-12 mo.	\$5	1978	1986	372.57	20,478	\$102,390
Waterfowl Permit-12 mo.	\$3	1979	1980	372.57	16,591	\$49,773
Turkey Permit-12 mo.	\$5	1985	1987	372.57	30,089	\$150,445

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***Table II***

<u>Lifetime/5-Year Licences</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Establish</u>	<u>Last Fee Change</u>	<u>Statutory Reference</u>	<u>1997-1998 Number Sold</u>	<u>1997-1998 Revenue</u>
Lifetime Sportsman-infant	\$400	1990	1990	372.57	99	\$39,600
Lifetime Sportsman-youth	\$700	1990	1990	372.57	25	\$17,500
Lifetime Sportsman-adult	\$1000	1990	1990	372.57	148	\$148,000
Lifetime Hunting-infant	\$200	1990	1990	372.57	2	\$400
Lifetime Hunting-youth	\$350	1990	1990	372.57	5	\$1,750
Lifetime Hunting-adult	\$500	1990	1990	372.57	18	\$9,000
Lifetime Freshwater-infant	\$125	1990	1990	372.57	17	\$2,125
Lifetime Freshwater-youth	\$225	1990	1990	372.57	4	\$900
Lifetime Freshwater-adult	\$300	1990	1990	372.57	34	\$10,200
5-Year Freshwater	\$60	1990	1990	372.57	3,875	\$232,500
5-Year Hunting Only	\$55	1998	1998	372.57	166	\$9,130

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

**Table III**

<u>Commercial Licenses</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Establish</u>	<u>Last Fee Change</u>	<u>Statutory Reference</u>	<u>1997-1998 Number Sold</u>	<u>1997-1998 Revenue</u>
Res. Commercial Fishing	\$25	1978	1985	372.65	1,690	\$42,250
Nonres. Commercial Fishing	\$100	1978	1990	372.65	12	\$1,200
Res. Fresh Water Fish Dealer	\$40	1929	1990	372.65	3,397	\$135,880
Nonres. Retail Fish Dealer	\$100	1929	1990	372.65	8	\$800
Nonres. Wholesale Fish Dealer	\$500	1929	1929	372.65	13	\$6,500
Nonres. Wholesale Buyer	\$50	1929	1990	372.65	4	\$200
Haul Seine	\$100	1976	1976	372.651	12	\$1,200
Private Fish Pond	\$3/acre	1985	1985	372.5705	18	\$7,296
Hunting Preserve	\$25	1959	1959	372.661	123	\$3,075
Blanket Hunting Preserve	\$500	1989	1989	372.661	24	\$12,000
Game Farm	\$5	1929	1929	372.16	575	\$2,875
Res. Statewide Fur Dealer	\$100	1929	1929	372.66	20	\$2,000
Res. Local Fur Dealer	\$10	1929	1929	372.66	18	\$180
Res. Fur Dealer Agent	\$5	1929	1929	372.66	4	\$20
Nonres. Wholesale Fur Dealer	\$500	1929	1929	372.66	2	\$1,000
Nonres. Fur Dealer Agent	\$100	1929	1929	372.66	0	0
Wildlife Exhibitor 10 or less	\$5	1967	1967	372.921	1,196	\$5,980
Wildlife Exhibitor 11 or more	\$25	1967	1967	372.921	3,581	\$89,525

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

<u>Commercial Licenses</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Establish</u>	<u>Last Fee Change</u>	<u>Statutory Reference</u>	<u>1997-1998 Number Sold</u>	<u>1997-1998 Revenue</u>
Venomous Reptile	\$5	1953	1953	372.87	428	\$2,140
Personal Pet	\$100	1974	1974	372.922	214	\$21,400
Res. Alligator Trapper	\$250	1987	1987	372.6673	801	\$200,250
Nonres. Alligator Trapper	\$1,000	1987	1987	372.6673	7	\$7,000
Alligator Trapper Agent	\$50	1987	1987	372.6673	1,147	\$57,350
Alligator Farming	\$250	1987	1987	372.6673	55	\$13,750
Alligator Farming Agent	\$50	1987	1987	372.6673	19	\$950
Alligator Processor	\$250	1987	1987	372.6673	5	\$1,250
Alligator Public Egg Permit	\$4	1987	1987	372.6673	15,055	\$60,220
Alligator Private Egg Permit	\$2	1987	1987	376.6673	11,376	\$22,752
Alligator Public Hatchling Tag	\$10	1987	1987	372.6674	1,823	\$18,230
Alligator Private Hatchling Tag	\$5	1987	1987	372.6674	0	0
Alligator Validation Tag>7 ft.	\$30	1987	1987	372.6674	2,216	\$66,480
Alligator Validation Tag>7 ft.	\$25	1987	1987	372.6674	4,434	\$110,850
Alligator Validation Tag<7 ft.	\$15	1987	1987	372.6674	623	\$9,345
Alligator Validation Tag<7 ft.	\$10	1987	1987	372.6674	3,387	\$33,860

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

***Table IV***

<b><u>Recreational Use Permits (Age 16-64)</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Establish</u></b>	<b><u>Last Fee Change</u></b>	<b><u>Statutory Reference</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998 Number Sold</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998 Revenue</u></b>
Miami Corp.	\$125	1998	1998	372.57	877	\$109,625
Nassau	\$96.25	1998	1998	372.57	600	\$57,750
Moore's Pasture	\$99	1999	1999	372.57	0	0
San Pedro Bay	\$225	1999	1999	372.57	0	0



*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

**Table V**

<b><u>Special Opportunity Hunt Permits (Age 16-64)</u></b>	<b><u>Cost</u></b>	<b><u>Establish</u></b>	<b><u>Last Fee Change</u></b>	<b><u>Statutory Reference</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998 Number Sold</u></b>	<b><u>1997-1998 Revenue</u></b>
Dove	\$35	1996	1996	372.57	748	\$26,180
Green Swamp Archery	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Green Swamp General Gun	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Green Swamp Hog Hunt	\$75	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Kissimmee River Hog Hunt	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	20	\$2,000
Tenoroc Lake Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	4	\$1,000
Twin Rivers Quail Hunt	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	18	\$1,800
Twin Rivers Bird Dog Training	\$10	1996	1996	372.57	12	\$120
Everglades Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Fort Drum General Gun	\$50	1996	1996	372.57	20	\$1,000
Fort Drum Hog Hunt	\$50	1996	1996	372.57	57	\$2,850
Holey Lane Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Guana River Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	7	\$1,750
Lake Panasoffkee Archery	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Lake Panasoffkee Hog Hunt	\$75	1996	1996	372.57	0	0
Ocala Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	5	\$1,250
Three Lakes Alligator Hunt	\$250	1996	1996	372.57	5	\$1,250
Triple N Ranch Hog Hunt	\$100	1996	1996	372.57	59	\$5,900

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

As indicated in the previous tables, many of the fees have not been raised since they were established -- some dating back to 1929. Seven licenses have not been increased since established in 1929:

* Nonresident Wholesale Fish Dealer	\$500
* Game Farm	\$5
* Resident Statewide Fur Dealer	\$100
* Resident Local Fur Dealer	\$10
* Resident Fur Dealer Agent	\$5
* Nonresident Wholesale Fur Dealer	\$500
* Nonresident Fur Dealer Agent	\$100

In FY 1997-98, there were no nonresident fur dealer agent licenses sold.

Other license fees that have not been changed in at least 20 years include:

* Resident Hunting -12 mo. (1979)	\$11
* Resident. and Nonres. trapping-12 mo. (1967)	\$25
* Haul Seine (1976)	\$100
* Hunting Preserve (1959)	\$25
* Wildlife Exhibitor 10 or less (1967)	\$5
* Wildlife Exhibitor 11 or more (1967)	\$25
* Venomous Reptile (1953)	\$5
* Personal Pet (1974)	\$100

Over the years, beginning in 1929, the Legislature has provided for various exemptions to the state's fishing and hunting license and permitting requirements. Those exemptions are as follows:

	<u>Created</u>	<u>Last Modified</u>
<b>Disability Exemption for all Sports Licenses and Permits (ss. 370.0605 &amp; 372.561, F.S.)</b>		
*Any resident may obtain a no-cost Disability Hunting/Fishing License upon presenting proof of residency and a certification of total and permanent disability by one of the following: --The United States Veterans Administration --Any branch of the United States Armed Services --A licensed Florida physician --A Workers Compensation Notice of Action (DWC-4)	1977	1997
<b>Freshwater License Exemptions (372.57, F.S.)</b>		

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

	<u><b>Created</b></u>	<u><b>Last Modified</b></u>
*Any child under 16 years of age	1929	1986
*Any resident 65 years of age or older	1929	1985
*Any person fishing in their county of residence on their homestead or the homestead of their spouse or minor child	1929	1929
*Any minor child fishing on the homestead of their parent	1929	1929
*Any resident who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States who is not stationed in this state, when home on leave for 30 days or less, upon submission of orders. This does include family members	1971	1971
*Any resident when fishing with live or natural bait, using poles or lines which are not equipped with a fishing line retrieval mechanism, and fishing for noncommercial purposes in the county of their residence, except on legally established fish management areas.	1986	1986
*Any person fishing in a private fish pond which is licensed in accordance with s. 372.5705, F.S., A private pond is a manmade pond constructed for the primary purpose of fishing, entirely within the property lines of the owner and with no surface water connection to public waters.	1965	1965
*Any person who has been accepted as a client for developmental services by the Dept. of Health and Rehabilitative Services, which department shall furnish such person proof thereof.	1978	1978
*Georgia residents 65 years of age or older who have in their possession a Georgia Honorary Combination Hunting and Fishing License and proof of their age. (Reciprocal agreement.)	1988	1988
*Members of the Seminole Tribe and the Miccosukee Tribe taking fish on their respective reservations for the purpose of food for the Indians themselves.	1955	1955
*Members of the Miccosukee Tribe taking fish for subsistence purposes and frogs for personal consumption as food or for commercial purposes within their reservation and the area leased of the Miccosukee Tribe.	1955	1955

**Hunting License Exemptions (s. 372.57, F.S.)**

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

	<u>Created</u>	<u>Last Modified</u>
*Any child under 16 years of age. Must be supervised and in the presence of an adult.	1929	1986
*Any resident 65 years of age or older	1929	1985
*Any person hunting in their county of residence on their homestead or the homestead of their spouse or minor child.	1951	1951
*Any minor child hunting on the homestead of their parent	1951	1951
*Any resident who is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, who is not stationed in this state, when home on leave for 30 days or less, upon submission of orders. This does include family members.	1971	1971
*Georgia residents 65 years of age or older who have in their possession a Georgia Honorary Combination Hunting and Fishing License and proof of their age. (Reciprocal agreement)	1988	1988
*Members of the Seminole Tribe and the Miccosukee Tribe taking game on their respective reservations for the purpose of food for the Indians themselves.	1955	1955
*Members of the Miccosukee Tribe taking game for subsistence purposes within their reservation and the area leased to the Miccosukee Tribe.	1955	1955

Because of the various exemptions from the license requirements, those under 16 do not need a license to hunt or fish, nor do those over 65. In 1990, 18.3 percent of Florida's population was 65 or older, a percentage that increases as the baby boomers age. When this senior citizen exemption was set in the 1950's, less than 10 percent of Florida's population was over 65.

One of the exemptions provided by the Legislature has proven to be particularly troublesome. In 1979, the Legislature chose to exempt certain disabled persons from the fee requirements for hunting and fishing in Florida. Since that time, the Commission has indicated that 92,049 free permanent licenses have been issued to disabled residents.

From 1989 to 1995, there was a significant increase in the number of free disabled licenses issued. During those years, 49 percent, or 45,497, of those licenses were issued. Basically, anyone could receive the license fee exemption if they had a statement from a physician certifying total and permanent disability. Such liberal language encouraged abuse of this exemption and lead to

increased incidences of fraud and illegitimate claims. This in turn lead to lost revenues for the State.

As a result of such incidences of fraud and misrepresentations, the Legislature in 1996 amended this exemption provision to allow for the use of the workers compensation definition of total and permanent disability for purposes of applying the hunting and fishing license fee exemption. Under the Workers Compensation law, only a catastrophic injury, in the absence of conclusive proof of substantial earning capacity, would constitute permanent and total disability. Catastrophic injury meant spinal cord injury, amputation of a limb, severe brain or closed head injury, burns, blindness, etc. The 1996 revision had the effect of significantly reducing the fraud by requiring very specific and verifiable criteria under which a person could qualify for the exemption. However, the amended language created an inequity among disabled persons. Under the revised definition and criteria, persons with a disability caused by an accident would qualify for the exemption while persons with the same disability caused by a congenital condition would not.

The Commission has received a number of complaints regarding this issue. Many persons who have been certified as totally disabled by the Social Security Administration feel that the State should accept this determination and allow them to qualify for the hunting and fishing license fee exemption. The Social Security definition poses a problem also. Under their definition, the term “disability” means a physical or mental impairment which is medically determinable, which results in an inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity and which can be expected to last at least 12 months. Under the Social Security Act, the definition does use the word “permanent” since the Social Security Administration requires periodic reevaluation. It appears that this issue should be addressed by the 2000 Legislature.

If you add up the number of persons exempt from hunting and fishing licenses by virtue of age or disability, over 30 percent of Florida’s population is exempt.

### **Other States**

Florida appears to have the edge over other southeastern states when it comes to fishing opportunities, both freshwater and saltwater. There are approximately 7,710 natural lakes in Florida which are 10 acres or more in size. In addition, there are about 1 million acres of manmade impoundments, such as Lake Talquin and Conservation Areas 1,2, and 3 in South Florida. Finally, there are 1,711 rivers and streams with over 11,500 miles of water. Not included in these figures are the over 8,400 miles of coastline.

Hunting opportunities continue to decline as Florida becomes more and more

urbanized. Conservation land buying programs, such as P-2000, CARL, and Florida Forever may help to slow the loss of such recreational opportunities. The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has reported that the sale of hunting licenses in Florida declined 2.3 percent during FY 1998-1999.

However, Florida does provide hunting opportunities unique and special to Florida. Florida is the only place where one can bag an Osceola turkey. Also, Florida provides special alligator hunts. The Florida turkey stamp, however, only costs out-of-state residents \$5. During fiscal year 1997-1998, 29,369 turkey permits were sold.

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission staff recently surveyed 26 state including all of the southeastern states, and California and Texas. California and Texas were particularly important because they are also prime fishing destinations like Florida. In comparing the costs of licenses, the Commission found that Florida's license fees were less than the national average for every category, except nonresident hunting and resident trapping. Florida's nonresident hunting fee is \$150 and the national average for a hunting license is only \$65.26. However, Florida's fee does not require additional special tags or permits for hunting big game, such as deer, elk, etc. Some states, such as Missouri, North Carolina, and Virginia, require special permits in addition to the regular license for such game.

The following table summarizes the fee and permit programs of a few selected states in the Southeast, and California and Texas.

**COMPARATIVE LICENSES INFORMATION FOR SELECTED STATES**

	<b><u>Nonresident Licenses</u></b>	<b><u>Resident Licenses</u></b>
<b>Alabama</b>		
<i>Freshwater Fishing</i>		
--12 mo.	\$30	\$8.50 (12 mo.)
--7 day (FL, TN)	\$15	\$5.00 (7 day)
--7 day (MS)	\$14	
--7 day (LA)	\$25	
--7 day (All others)	\$10	
<i>Hunting</i>		
--All game	\$200 (12 mo.)	\$15 hunting statewide
--FL residents	\$50 (7 day)	(12 mo.)
<i>Freshwater Fish/Hunt</i>		\$23.50 (12 mo.)
<i>Combo</i>		
<i>Permits.</i>		
--Mgt. Area		\$3 (12 mo.)
--Waterfowl		\$6 (12 mo.)
<b>Georgia</b>		
<i>Fresh/Salt Fishing</i>		
--12 mo.	\$37	\$14 (12 mo.)
--7 day	\$20	\$8.50 (1 day)
--1 day	\$18.50	
<i>Hunting-all game</i>		
--12 mo.	\$177	\$19 (12 mo.)
--7 day	\$143	\$14.50 (1 day)
--1 day	\$123.50	
<i>Trapping</i>		
--12 mo.	\$295	\$30
<i>Combo Hunt/Fish</i>		\$31
<i>Sportsman</i>		\$60
<i>Permits</i>		
--Mgmt Area	\$73	\$19
--Archery/Muzzle	\$25	\$8
--Waterfowl	\$5.50	\$5.50

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

	<u><b>Nonresident Licenses</b></u>	<u><b>Resident Licenses</b></u>
<b>Texas</b>		
<i>Freshwater Fish</i>		\$19 (12 mo.)
--12 mo.	\$30	\$12 (14 day)
--5 day	\$20	\$10 (3 day)
<i>Hunting-all game</i>		
--12 mo.	\$250	\$19
<i>Trapping</i>		
--12 mo.	\$250	\$15
<i>Combo Hunt/Fish</i>		\$32 (12 mo.)
<i>Permits-12 mo.</i>		
--Archery stamp	\$7	\$7
--Muzzle. stamp	\$10	\$10
--Waterfowl stamp	\$7	\$7
--Turkey stamp	\$5	\$5
<b>California</b>		
<i>Freshwater Fish</i>		\$26.25 (12 mo.)
--12 mo.	\$71.25	
--10 day	\$26.25	
--2 day	\$ 9.50	
<i>Hunting-all game</i>		
--12 mo.	\$250.25	\$43.50 (12 mo.)
--2 day	\$183.50	
<i>Trapping</i>		
--12 mo.	\$351.75	\$70
<i>Permits</i>		
--Wildlife Area Pass	\$14.25 (12 mo.)	\$14.25 (12 mo.)
--Second Deer Tag	\$158 (12 mo.)	\$22 (12 mo.)
--State Duck Stamp	\$10	\$10



*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

	<u><b>Nonresident Licenses</b></u>	<u><b>Resident Licenses</b></u>
<b>Florida</b>		
<i>Freshwater Fish</i>		
--12 mo.	\$30	\$12
--7 day	\$15	
--Lifetime-infant		\$125
--Lifetime-youth		\$225
--Lifetime-adult		\$300
--5 year		\$60

*Review of License Fees and Exemptions Authorized in Chapter 372, F.S.*

	<u><b>Nonresident Licenses</b></u>	<u><b>Resident Licenses</b></u>
<i>Hunting</i>		
--12 mo.	\$150	\$11
--10 day	\$25	
--Lifetime-infant		\$200
--Lifetime-youth		\$350
--Lifetime-adult		\$500
--5 year		\$55
<i>Combo Fish/Hunt</i>		
--12 mo.		\$22
<i>Sportsman</i>		
--12 mo.	\$66	
--Lifetime-infant	\$400	
--Lifetime-youth	\$700	
--Lifetime-adult	\$1,000	
<i>Trapping</i>		
--12 mo.	\$25	\$25
<i>Permits</i>		
--Mgmt. Area		
12 mo.	\$25	\$25
--1 day	Varies from \$3-\$150 depending on no. of persons.	Varies from \$3-\$150 depending on no. of persons.
--Archery	\$5	\$5
--Muzzle loading	\$5	\$5
--Waterfowl	\$3	\$3
--Turkey	\$5	\$5

*\*In addition, Florida has 34 commercial licenses, 4 recreational use permits, and 18 special opportunity hunt permits.*

Even though Florida is a prime fishing destination, Florida's nonresident license is less expensive than the national average.

## **Conclusions**

Since the mid 1980's, the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission, now the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, has seen a decline of revenues from hunting and fishing licenses which is used to fund and support agency activities. Increasingly, the Commission has had to depend on subsidies from the General Revenue Fund. Today, license sales barely make up 30 percent of total revenues, while 34 percent of revenues comes from the General Revenue Fund.

The number of hunting and fishing licenses sold annually, particularly hunting licenses, is declining as opportunities to hunt become more limited.

Many of Florida's license fees have not been increased since they were established--some more than 20 years ago. In addition, some 30 percent of Florida residents are exempt from having to obtain a license to fish or hunt.

Over the past 9 years, the Commission has repeatedly faced shortfalls in the State Game Trust Fund. Recent information from the agency indicates that they may be facing a revenue shortfall of \$1.8 million in the State Game Trust Fund in FY 2000-01. The projected shortfall rises to \$2.8 million in FY 2001-02, and \$3.3 million in FY 2002-03.

## Sources

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2. Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, *Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission Internal Operating Budget for FY 1998-99* (As of September 30, 1998).
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4. Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, *Agency Strategic Plan for the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission FY 2000-2001 through FY 2004-2005*. (June 1999).
5. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission response to the Senate Natural Resources Committee questionnaire regarding the license fees and exemptions authorized in ch. 372, F.S.
6. *Hunting and Fishing License Market Assessment, Vol. I - Discussion, Recommendations, and Strategies*, presented to the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, December 1995, by Mark Damian Duda and Kira C. Young.
7. Senate Natural Resources Committee staff analysis on SB 1370 (1997).